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DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL
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December 1, 2016

House Committee on Elections and Government Reform.

House Bills HB6066, HB6067, HB6068

Dear distinguished members of this committee:

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MI DDC) strongly opposes House Bills HB6066, HB6067, and HB6068. As drafted these bills could restrict many People With Disabilities (PWD) their ability to fully exercise their constitutional right to cast a countable ballot.

Participating in the electoral process is extremely important to many PWD. As such, the ability to engage in the electoral process through voting in person rather than through absentee ballot is held sacred as well. These bills would place undue restrictions and insurmountable hurdles in front of many PWD by potentially requiring two very time consuming trips to cast one vote.

To further explain this issue, many PWD rely on public transportation which encompasses great cost and considerable time commitment to arrange for a ride. For most transportation providers, there is a requirement of 24 hour notice to arrange for specialized transportation that will accommodate their specific needs. Using the scenario that a PWD forgets their identification, they would no longer be able to sign an affidavit as to their identity, but rather be subjected to the unneeded time and expense to coordinate a trip to the clerk's office; doubling their time and expenses for the ballot cast.

An additional point, taking into consideration the required time and expenses of coordinating transportation, a PWD who is employed may not be able to leave work to return to the clerk's office to submit a photo-identification when a sworn affidavit has proven to be extremely effective and sufficient.

The MI DDC believes that these bills will invalidate many ballots cast by PWD through the complex requirements of securing transportation twice, (in the event of a person simply forgetting their identification) in order to cast a single ballot. As an accommodation, we request that PWD, seniors, and military personnel still be able to verify their identity through the affidavit provision.

Sincerely,

Vendella M. Collins
Executive Director-Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council